UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
56th meeting
held on
Monday, 28 March 1994
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 56th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HADID (Algeria)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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(a) FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/48/SR.56
27 April 1994
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

94-80547 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 134: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN EL SALVADOR (continued) (A/C.5/48/L.53)

Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.53

1. Mrs. ROTHEISER (Austria), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.53, said that the draft resolution was the result of consensus achieved in informal consultations; she recommended that it should be adopted without a vote.

2. The CHAIRMAN said that he took it that the Committee wished to adopt draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.53 without a vote.

3. Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.53 was adopted.

4. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) said that his delegation was still concerned about arrears in the payment of contributions to ONUSAL and the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA). It was regrettable that the final text of the resolution did not incorporate the text of a previous draft resolution submitted by another delegation which had noted that the level of additional contributions apportioned among member States was unnecessarily high. However, he welcomed the Committee's adoption of the proposal made by his delegation that approximately $21 million should be appropriated, rather than the lower sum proposed by other delegations which, in its opinion, would not have been sufficient.

5. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 134; he requested the Rapporteur to report thereon directly to the General Assembly.

AGENDA ITEM 131: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS ANGOLA VERIFICATION MISSION (continued) (A/C.5/48/L.50)

Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.50

6. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.50, submitted by Canada on the basis of informal consultations, and said that he took it that the Committee wished to adopt that draft resolution without a vote.

7. Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.50 was adopted.

8. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 131; he requested the Rapporteur to report thereon directly to the General Assembly.

AGENDA ITEM 166: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN LIBERIA (continued) (A/C.5/48/L.52)

Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.52

9. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.52, said that the draft resolution was the result of consensus achieved in informal consultations; he recommended that it should be adopted without a vote.

10. The CHAIRMAN said that he took it that the Committee wished to adopt draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.52 without a vote.

11. Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.52 was adopted.

12. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 166; he requested the Rapporteur to report thereon directly to the General Assembly.

AGENDA ITEM 138: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (continued)

(a) FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (A/C.5/48/L.69)

13. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the support account for peace-keeping operations (A/C.5/48/69); in that respect, he drew attention to General Assembly resolution 48/226, of 23 December 1993, and in particular operative paragraphs 1 and 3.

14. Mr. TAKASU (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the support account for peace-keeping operations, said that the report had been prepared on an emergency basis in order to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the severe difficulties caused by the adoption of resolution 48/226. He recalled that the Advisory Committee, in its report to the General Assembly (A/48/757), had recommended that a total of 148 posts should be authorized for the six-month period between 1 January and 30 June 1994. However the General Assembly, in its resolution 48/226 of 23 December 1993, had approved 122 additional posts, thereby reducing the number of posts by 26. All 26 were for the Department of Administration and Management and of the 26 posts, 24 had previously been authorized by the Advisory Committee in July 1993 and had been operating between August and December 1993.

15. Although it was considered that support for peace-keeping operations was primarily the function of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and the Field Operations Division, other units of the Secretariat also provided essential support, without which the effective functioning of peace-keeping operations would be seriously compromised. In that respect, he drew attention to the annex to the report of the Secretary-General, which clearly set out the situation.

(Mr. Takasu)

16. The reduction of posts in the Department of Administration and Management, which was shown in detail in the table appearing in paragraph 1 of the report, had seriously affected the Secretariat's capacity to provide the necessary support services for peace-keeping operations. Paragraph 3 of the report provided details on the difficulties which had arisen in various units of the Department of Administration and Management as a result of the reduction in posts.

17. In view of that situation, the Secretary-General believed that the problem must be resolved as a matter of urgency and was therefore requesting the Committee to review the question with a view to endorsing the Advisory Committee's recommendations contained in paragraph 32.V of its report (A/48/757), especially since the cost of the reinstatement of those posts would be met within the amount already approved by the General Assembly. In that respect, he wished to inform members of the Committee that the report requested in paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 48/226 was under preparation and would be circulated as soon as possible along with the Secretary-General's proposals in respect of the posts to be financed from the support account for the period beginning in July 1994.

18. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom) said that, on the substance of the question, in December 1993 his delegation had agreed with the Advisory Committee's recommendation; the reinstatement of the twenty-six posts abolished under General Assembly resolution 48/226 was therefore, in principle, acceptable, within the financial limits imposed by that resolution and on the understanding that the Advisory Committee and the Secretariat would provide information to enable the Committee to review the operation of the support account and assess its transparency at its next resumed session. Nevertheless, he felt that the adoption of decisions should be postponed until a later meeting.

19. From the current perspective, his delegation believed that the decision adopted by the General Assembly in December 1993 had been wrong; that, however, was not surprising, in view of the difficulties which both the Committee and the Advisory Committee had experienced in taking up the documents relating to the budget and the support account, which were closely linked. The debate on these documents by the Committee and the Advisory Committee had culminated, as was becoming customary in the work of the Committee, at the end of the regular session, in a process of mutual concessions and pressures which, although habitual, was illogical and, ultimately, highly unsatisfactory.

20. As to document A/C.5/48/69, he said that his delegation had received it when it had entered the room; he would need at least 24 hours to study it in full and seek instructions from his Government. He did not want to say that an attempt had been made to put pressure on the debate on the document, but the Committee had too much experience with documents provided only 48 hours before they needed to be approved, and Governments did not always have time to determine their positions on subjects that were sometimes complex and important.

21. Mr. BOIN (France) supported the statement by the representative of the United Kingdom that he had been unable to request instructions from his

(Mr. Boin, France)

Government on the subject of document A/C.5/48/69, because he had only just received it upon entering the room. Moreover, the dates on the French and English versions of the document were not the same and he wondered if that was the interpretation given to the term "simultaneous" in the United Nations. The term "simultaneous", in his delegation's view, meant on the same day and he would therefore welcome an explanation from the Secretariat.

22. A review of the report which the Secretary-General had submitted in December had revealed a problem of principle with regard to the posts within the Department of Administration and Management which were to be financed from the support account. There was also a problem of the criteria and justification for the use of funds from the support account for peace-keeping operations. Some delegations were very interested, and continued to be interested, in avoiding what they referred to as double-entry budgeting. Perhaps three months was insufficient time to prepare a report such as the one requested in December, which had still not been received, although there was still a need for the Secretariat to establish transparent and clear criteria and a rational approach. His delegation would welcome further details in order to be able to adopt a decision which was consistent with the budget and acceptable to Governments.

23. He was surprised at the references to overall reductions when what had been decided in December was not to approve certain proposals for the creation of new posts. He was also surprised that the Secretariat had failed to mention any difficulties in the Office of Conference Services, even though there was widespread dissatisfaction with that Office among those delegations which were not lucky enough to speak English. More particularly, the issuance of document A/C.5/48/69 in the unsatisfactory manner which he had just described revealed the increasingly inadequate performance of that Office, a situation which needed to be addressed.

24. While he understood why the Secretariat might expect approval for the 26 posts, as proposed in document A/C.5/48/69, it was necessary to have an exchange of views and informal consultations before a decision was adopted. Even though the Secretariat was working in good faith and was not attempting to force the adoption of its recommendations on such a sensitive matter, it must be emphasized that the material working conditions of delegations were neither easy nor satisfactory.

25. His delegation would be flexible and cooperative but, whatever decisions were adopted with regard to the 26 posts, it believed it was essential for the Secretariat to submit a report which clearly explained the criteria used to justify the use of funds from the support account for peace-keeping operations, together with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, which should be made available as soon as possible.

26. Mr. STÖCKL (Germany) said that his delegation was ready to give favourable consideration to the reinstatement of the 26 posts and looked forward to studying the report of the Secretariat containing clarifications and the precise criteria to be used in future for determining which posts should be financed from the support account for peace-keeping operations. As for the problems

(Mr. Stöckl, Germany)

faced by the Department of Administration and Management, he was of the view that everyone concerned should cooperate in order to find a solution whereby favourable consideration could be given to the request of the Secretary-General contained in document A/C.5/48/69.

27. Mr. GRANT (United States of America) said that his Government viewed the question of the support account for peace-keeping operations as an important and sensitive one, which it believed should be considered within the broader context of the discussion on the account as a whole. Generally speaking, he preferred that approach rather than that of dealing with one particular aspect of the support account.

28. As mentioned in paragraph 4 of the Secretary-General's report, the cost of the reinstatement of the posts would be met within the amount already approved in the General Assembly resolution. He wondered what the situation would be if, for example, the posts were not reinstated; which other parts of the Organization's activities financed from the support account could generate the savings that had led to the conclusion arrived at in the document, and other such questions.

29. Mrs. SAEKI (Japan) said that the Fifth Committee was constantly calling for responsibility, transparency, good management, etc., but it was also its responsibility to request the Secretariat to do a good job, and for that it had to provide the necessary resources. Although the Committee could wait for a report setting out the conceptual approach, it was now in a position to adopt a provisional decision supporting the proposals put forward in the Secretary-General's report, which would be reviewed when the issues of principle were considered at a later stage.

30. Mr. CHUINKAM (Cameroon) said he fully supported the proposal that the 26 posts should be reinstated and agreed with the views expressed by the delegations of the United Kingdom, Germany, and, in particular, Japan.

31. Mr. DAMICO (Brazil) supported the Secretariat's arguments and recalled the repercussions which previous decisions had had, particularly in circumstances in which the effectiveness of the Secretariat's work appeared to be jeopardized. He hoped that, following informal consultations, his delegation would be in a position to adopt a decision with regard to the recommendations contained in document A/C.5/48/69. Since the reinstatement of the 26 posts did not entail an increased level of resources, he did not foresee any difficulties in approving the Secretary-General's proposals.

32. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had not considered it necessary to submit comments on document A/C.5/48/69, since it had done so the previous year. Nevertheless, had the request entailed the allocation of additional funds, the Advisory Committee would have formulated its comments.

33. In paragraph 2 of resolution 48/226, the General Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to enter into commitments to cover costs borne by the support

account in an amount not to exceed $16,376,250, as recommended by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 34 of its report (A/48/757). However, a problem had arisen in that the figures recommended by the Committee had been accepted in toto, but the total number of posts recommended by the Advisory Committee had not been accepted.

34. Secondly, the issues of principle relating to the posts to be charged to the support account or to the regular budget, particularly those in the Department of Administration and Management, had been considered on a provisional basis, and owing to the delay in submission of the Secretary-General's original report (A/48/470), the Committee had decided to postpone submission of detailed comments on those issues until 1994; that position had been adopted without prejudice to that to be adopted regarding the issues of principle, as indicated in paragraph 7 of the Advisory Committee's report.

35. Mr. BOIN (France) asked whether the report that was awaited was that of the Advisory Committee or of the Secretary-General. In any event, what was important was when the document would be issued so that the matter could be taken up during the current or the following week.

36. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) indicated that in paragraph 6 of its report (A/48/757), the Advisory Committee requested the Secretary-General to submit to it a report containing conceptual principles and a practical rationale. The Committee would make its recommendations on that report at its next session, which was to begin on 3 May 1994.

37. Mr. JU Kuilin (China) said that, like other delegations, China needed to examine more carefully the report in document A/C.5/48/69 which had just been distributed. The Committee should ensure that no obstacles were placed in the way of peace-keeping activities. Consequently, given the difficulties reported by the Secretary-General in his report, his delegation agreed with others, such as that of Japan, that the question should be considered in greater depth. The Secretariat should be requested to provide more information, such as the exact amounts proposed by the Secretary-General and the amounts recommended by the Advisory Committee. He wondered what effect the addition of the 26 posts would have on available resources and he believed that it would be useful to compare the estimates and the quantities proposed, as well as to determine the exact number of posts that were necessary.

38. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) said that, even though the Secretariat had made it clear that an emergency situation existed and the Secretary-General had requested the General Assembly to give urgent consideration to the matter, there was no need to adopt a hasty decision. Given the Committee's heavy workload and the fact that many delegations had not had time to study the latest document that had been distributed, he proposed that a short official meeting should be held later in the week for the purpose of adopting a decision on the specific request submitted by the Secretary-General for the establishment of 26 additional posts (or 51, according to his delegation's calculations),

(Mr. Spaans, Netherlands)

irrespective of the Committee's debate on the overall question or on the support account itself.

39. Mr. KELLY (Ireland) supported the proposal made by the representative of the Netherlands.

40. Mrs. EMERSON (Portugal) supported the proposal made by the representative of the Netherlands and said that, in the light of the information provided by the Controller on behalf of the Secretary-General and the report submitted by the Advisory Committee (A/48/757), Portugal supported the reinstatement of the 26 posts in question pending a new report on which the Committee would base its decisions with effect from 1 July 1994.

41. Mr. GRANT (United States of America) regretted that the Committee felt pressured to adopt an immediate decision and wished to place on record that his delegation would not subject itself to any deadline in the consideration of the matter.

The meeting rose at 12.02 p.m.